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TREES AND PLANTS IN HOMER.

Two different attitudes are commonly taken towards plant life, that of the unscientific amateur who enjoys flowers and trees for their own sake, and that of the scientific botanist who studies their classification, physiology, and the like.

Among the Greeks we find both the amateur and the scientist, but naturally the amateur existed long before the scientist emerged. It was not until the second half of the fourth century B.C. that the Greeks became pioneers in the systematic study of botany, as of so many other sciences. Botany was doubtless allotted its place in the great system of sciences in which the master mind of Aristotle classified all human knowledge as it existed in his day; and though Aristotle did not himself produce a History of Plants as a companion treatise to his work on animals, there are sufficiently numerous references scattered up and down his writings to enable us to form an adequate idea of his doctrine on this subject.¹ There is also in the Aristotelian Corpus a short treatise of great interest, the *de Plantis*,² the work not of Aristotle himself but of a somewhat later Peripatetic; it no doubt, however, adequately represents in a brief form the theories which he formed on the physiology of plants and agrees with the doctrine of his acknowledged works. It contains many points of interest; in particular the views ex-

pressed on sex in plants partly anticipate the results of modern research.

The lack of an exhaustive botanic treatise by Aristotle himself was supplied by Theophrastus, his pupil and successor as head of the Peripatetic school; and the fact that Theophrastus' two great works, the *Historia Plantarum* and the *de Causis Plantarum*, have survived has led to the popular idea that Theophrastus was the father of scientific botany—a title which should in all justice be attributed rather to his master Aristotle. The two treatises of Theophrastus not only deal with the physiology of plants, but also describe a great number of individual species, with particular emphasis upon their uses as drugs. It was the work of Theophrastus and his successors which, at the Revival of Learning, formed the starting-point of the modern science of botany.

So much for the work of the Greeks as the founders of scientific botany. Earlier Greek writers, both in verse and in prose, naturally give us an abundance of unscientific information about trees and plants. It would be a fascinating study to trace the extent of botanical knowledge shown by the various Greek authors whose works have survived. Many points of interest would, I think, emerge. For instance, the topic of Hesiod's *Works and Days* naturally leads him to deal with many trees and plants, and he throws some interesting light on the subject of the folk-lore of plants; the History of Herodotus contains a mass of information on what may be called economic botany, the distribution of plants and their practical uses; Hippocrates is chiefly concerned with plants from a pharmacological point of view; Sophocles is obviously more interested in trees and flowers than either Aeschylus or Euripides; lastly, Theocritus could, I think, be shown to have been a true child of the age in which he

¹ Cp. F. Wimmer, *Phytologiae Aristotelicae Fragmenta*: Vratislaviae, typis Grassii, Barthii et Soc., 1838.

² The text of this work has had a curious history. The original Greek text was lost, but had been previously translated into Arabic. The Arabic version was translated into Latin by a certain Englishman, by name Alfredus, whose knowledge both of Arabic and of Latin left something to be desired. The Greek text as given in the Berlin Aristotle is a late Byzantine translation from the Latin back again into Greek, and is thus three times removed from the original (see the Oxford translation of Aristotle, vol. vi, Preface to the *de Plantis*).

lived as having a genuinely scientific interest in botany.

The present study, however, is to be limited to Homer, and proposes to examine the references to trees, shrubs and plants which occur in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, and to try to draw some conclusions as to the interest in, and the attitude towards, plant life displayed in these poems. Greek philosophers and thinkers sometimes imply that the Homeric poems contain the essentials of all knowledge on such subjects as war and government; but it is to be feared that for botanical study Homer would hardly provide an adequate foundation.

On first consideration, one has the impression that there are abundant references in Homer to trees and plants. Memory recalls a number of similes in which forest trees figure; then there are the descriptions of the gardens of Alcinoüs and of Calypso's Isle; and one recalls the asphodel, the hyacinth, the lotus, and that mysterious plant *moly*. But, as a matter of fact, a systematic search reveals only some fifty-odd botanical names in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. There are nearly three times as many in Virgil,¹ but the topic of the *Georgics* accounts for the majority of them.

To take the trees of Homer first. Their names do not present any very difficult problems; they are for the most part those which are familiar all over Europe.

The oak (*Quercus robur*), the king of the forest, is naturally the most frequently mentioned. That it is the tree *par excellence* is shown by the fact that its name *δρῦς*, like the Sanskrit root *dru-*, was originally a general term for 'wood' or 'tree'; hence a wood-cutter is *δρυτόμος* and a thicket *δρυμός*. The oak figures in a number of similes in the *Iliad*, comparing, for example, the fall of a warrior with the felling of an oak (xiii, 389; xvi, 482), and the din of battle with wind raging through an oak-grove (xiv, 396). The oak figures also in two proverbial expressions (*Il.* xxii, 126; *Od.* xix, 163). Reference is

made in the *Odyssey* (xiv, 327) to the oracular oaks of Dodona. The leaves of the oak were used for fodder and its acorns given to swine, including the companions of Odysseus after they had been turned into swine (*Od.* x, 242).

Another kind of oak is the *φηγός* (*Quercus aesculus*), which derives its name from the root *φαγ-*, since its fruit is edible. There was a famous specimen of this tree near the Scaean Gate of Troy, where it formed a prominent landmark (*Il.* vi, 237, etc.). The wood of the *φηγός* was used for the axle-trees of chariots. In Latin *fagus* is not an oak but a beech, and our English word beech is etymologically the same as *φηγός*.

The ilex or *evergreen oak* is not mentioned in Homer, but its acorn *ἄκυλος* occurs (*Od.* x, 242) as a form of fodder.

The *ash* (*μελίη*) is frequently mentioned as the material used for the shafts of spears. It also occurs in similes, for example (*Il.* xiii, 178):

He tumbled like an ash,
That on the crest of some conspicuous hill
Is severed by the axe and bows to earth
Its tender leaves.²

The *elm* (*πετέλη*) is mentioned in the *Iliad* (xxi, 242) as growing at Troy on the banks of the Scamander, where Achilles clutched at the trunk of an elm and uprooted it, and on the banks of the Xanthus, where elms were consumed by the fire of Hephaestus (*ib.* 350), and at Thebe in the Troad (*Il.* vi, 419).

Two kinds of *poplar* occur in Homer, the *black* and the *white*. The black poplar (*αῖγειρος*) grew in Calypso's island (*Od.* v, 64), on the island off the coast of the Cyclopes (*Od.* ix, 141), in the underworld (*Od.* x, 510), and in Ithaca (*Od.* xvii, 208). One of the most picturesque similes in the *Odyssey* (vii, 106) thus describes women busily working in the house of Alcinoüs:

And others weave at looms or twist the yarn,
While, like the leaves of a tall poplar, flit
The glancing shuttles through their fingertips.³

² The quotations from the *Iliad* are given by kind permission from Sir William Marris' translation (Oxford University Press, 1934).

³ The quotations from the *Odyssey* are given by kind permission from Dr. J. W. Mackail's translation (Oxford, at the Clarendon Press, 1932).

¹ See John Sargeant, *The Trees, Shrubs and Plants of Virgil*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1920.

Perhaps the species here intended is the *Populus tremula* or aspen-tree, which is proverbial for the fluttering of its leaves.

The white poplar (ἀχερωΐς) derives its name from the river of the underworld, whence it was brought by Heracles, whose sacred tree it was. It occurs in two similes in the *Iliad* (xiii, 389; xvi, 482).

The *cornel-tree* (κράνεια) is akin to, but much larger than, the English dog-wood. It is mentioned with other forest trees in a fine simile in the *Iliad* (xvi, 767):

And as the East wind and the South contend
Together in the mountain dells to shake
Deep woods of oak and ash or cornel-trees,
Smooth-barked, that grind long arms against
each other
With eerie noise, and branches crack and snap;
So Trojans and Achaeans rushed together.

The fruit of the cornel was used as a food for swine (*Od.* x, 242). The Romans used its wood for spear-shafts, but the Homeric warriors seem to have preferred the ash.

The *tamarisk* (μυρίκη) grew freely in the neighbourhood of Troy. It was under a tamarisk that Diomedes hid the captured arms of Dolon and piled some of its branches and reeds over them (*Il.* x, 466), and it was upon a tamarisk stump that the horses of Adrastus stumbled and threw their master, who was captured by Menelaus (*Il.* vi, 39).

The *willow* (ἰτένη, *Salix alba*) grew in the plain of Troy (*Il.* xxi, 350) and in the underworld (*Od.* x, 510). Closely akin to it is the *chaste-tree* (λύγος, *Agnus castus*), whose twigs were used for tying the sheep of the Cyclops together (*Od.* ix, 427), and the legs of the stag shot by Odysseus on his arrival in the island of Circe (*Od.* x, 166), and by Achilles for tying up the two sons of Priam whom he caught while they were tending their flocks on Mount Ida (*Il.* xi, 105). *Ostiers* (οἰσύναι ῥίπες), probably branches of the *Salix viminalis*, were used by Odysseus for binding together the raft on which he left the island of Calypso (*Od.* v, 256).

The *silver fir* (ἐλάτη, *Abies*), to which Homer gives the epithet 'high as heaven', is the tallest of all the forest

trees, often growing to a height of a hundred feet. It occurs in a simile describing a fallen warrior (*Il.* v, 560), but the word was more often used as a synonym for an oar, for which its light, tough wood was a suitable material.

Two words occur for the *pine-tree*, πεύκη and πίτυς: they are probably the Corsican and Aleppo varieties. πεύκη occurs in a fine simile in the *Iliad* (xi, 494):

As when
Sweeps down upon the plain out of the hills
A winter torrent, swollen with the rain
Of Zeus, and many a dead oak, many a pine,
It bears along, and casts a mass of drift
Out to the sea; so glorious Ajax scoured
The plain, resistless, cleaving horse and man.

It was a stump of πεύκη which served as a turning-post in the chariot race at the funeral games of Patroclus (*Il.* xxiii, 328). πίτυς was used as a material for ships (*Il.* xiii, 390), and for the fence of the courtyard outside the Cyclops' cave (*Od.* ix, 186).

The *alder* (κλήθρη) occurs only in the description of Calypso's island (*Od.* v, 64); this is also the only passage in which the *cypress* is mentioned as growing, though its wood was used for the construction of Odysseus' palace in Ithaca (*Od.* xvii, 340).

The wood of the *cedar* (κέδρος)—which is not the cedar of Lebanon but the prickly cedar, *Juniperus oxycedrus*—was burnt as a fragrant fuel in the house of Calypso (*Od.* v, 60); and the adjective κέδρινος is used of the inner store-chamber of Priam's palace, which was doubtless lined with this material (*Il.* xxiv, 192).

The *plane-tree* (πλατάνιστος) is only once mentioned in Homer. It was under a plane-tree at Aulis that the Greeks sacrificed on their way to Troy (*Il.* ii, 307):

There on the holy altars round the spring
We paid the gods choice hecatombs, beneath
A lovely plane-tree, whence bright water ran.

It is curious that the plane-tree is not more frequently mentioned in Homer. With its widespread shade and the water which generally springs near it, it is one of the trees which travellers in Greece and Asia Minor find most welcome and remember best. It is a very long-lived tree, and there is a

specimen of colossal size and great age still shown in the island of Cos as that under which Hippocrates used to sit.

The *bay-tree* (δάφνη) is only once mentioned in Homer, where it overshadows the entrance to the cave of the Cyclops (*Od.* ix, 183). Apparently it was not yet sacred to Apollo, as it is in the Homeric Hymn to that god.

The fruit-trees of Homer are the *apple*, *pear*, *fig*, *olive*, *vine* and *pomegranate*. They are always mentioned in connexion with their fruits, except that the wood of the olive is spoken of as used for the handle of an axe (*Il.* xiii, 612; *Od.* v, 236). The most elaborate account of fruit-trees occurs in the famous description of the garden of Alcinous (*Od.* vii, 115 ff.). Another list is given in the account of the temptation of Tantalus in the *Nέκυνια* (*Od.* xi, 588 ff.). Again, in the recognition scene between Odysseus and Laertes, the former finally convinces his father that he is indeed his son by reminding him how, when he was a child, Laertes had allowed him to call his own ten apple-trees, thirteen pear-trees, forty fig-trees and fifty rows of vines (*Od.* xxiv, 340 ff.).

The *wild forms* of the *fig* (ἐρινεός), *pear* (ἄχερδος) and *olive* (φυλίη) also occur in Homer. The wild fig gave its name to a hill near Troy on which there was a watch-tower (*Il.* xxii, 145), and it was to a wild fig-tree overhanging Charybdis that Odysseus clung and saved himself from destruction (*Od.* xii, 103). The wild pear was used for hedging round the hut of Eumaeus (*Od.* xiv, 10); and it was between two thickets, one of wild olives and the other of cultivated olives, that Odysseus rested after he had been cast ashore on the land of the Phaeacians (*Od.* v, 477).

The *date-palm* (φοῖνιξ) is only mentioned once in Homer, where Odysseus compares Nausicaa to this tree (*Od.* vi, 163):

Once on a time indeed a young palm-tree
In Delos by Apollo's sanctuary
Upspringing thus I saw—for thither too
I voyaged and much people followed me,

When on that journey evil-starred I went
That brought me woe—and in astonishment
Long gazed I on it; for in all the world
No shaft so stately up from earth is sent.

As its name shows, the date-palm was an importation from the East and clearly a rarity in Homeric times, since Odysseus implies that he had never seen it except at Delos, which he visited on his way to Troy. It was at Delos that the sacred palm-tree grew under which Leto gave birth to Apollo and Artemis and which was afterwards commemorated by a bronze palm-tree standing in the sacred enclosure at Delos in historical times. There is no mention earlier than Herodotus of the use of dates as an article of food. Date-palms produce no fruit in the latitudes of Greece and Asia Minor.

The *bramble* (βάτος, *Rubus ulmifolius*) occurs once in the *Odyssey* (xxiv, 230), where Laertes wears gloves to protect himself from its thorns.

So much for trees and shrubs, which form the largest class in the Homeric flora. The flowering plants are much less numerous.

The *rose* does not occur in Homer, except in such compound adjectives as ῥοδοδάκτυλος. The same is true of the *lily* (λείριον), which only occurs in the adjective λειριόεις, which is used twice in the *Iliad*, once as an epithet of the cry of the grasshopper (*Il.* iii, 152) and once as an epithet of human flesh (*Il.* xiii, 830). In both passages the adjective seems to mean 'delicate', 'tender'.

The *poppy* (μήκων), as a garden flower, occurs in a simile (*Il.* viii, 306):

And he dropped
His head aslant, like poppy in a garden,
Laden with seed and with the rains of spring.

The *crocus*—the *Crocus sativus*, a purple variety of which the yellow stigmata supply a dye—occurs in epithets such as κροκόπεπλος used of the dawn, and once in the *Iliad* (xiv, 348), where the earth made a couch of flowers spring up for Zeus and Hera:

Beneath them earth divine
Made fresh, new grass to grow and dewy lotus
And crocus and thick, tender hyacinth.

The *lotus* has several different meanings in Greek which have nothing in common except the name. In the passage just quoted it is used of a leguminous plant, identical with, or

closely akin to, the common *Lotus corniculatus* or bird's-foot trefoil; it was a favourite fodder for Homeric horses. Secondly, it is used of the fruit eaten by the Lotus-eaters (*Od.* ix, 84); this is the *Zizyphus lotus* or jujube-tree of Northern Africa. Herodotus (iv, 177) tells us that its fruit is the size of a lentisk-berry and in sweetness resembles the date, and that a kind of wine could be made from it. It is common in the oases of the African desert and has been acclimatized in the French Riviera. (Two other kinds of lotus occur in the classics, the *Nymphaea lotus*, or Nile water-lily, and the nettle-tree (*Celtis Australis*), the stems of which were used as pipes; hence *λωτός* is often used as a synonym for a flute.)

The *hyacinth* is mentioned as a growing plant in the passage already quoted about the couch of Zeus and Hera. It also occurs twice in the *Odyssey* (vi, 231; xxiii, 158), where Athena makes the hair of Odysseus grow thick and curly 'like the flower of the hyacinth'. The latter use seems to point to the hyacinth as we know it, to which dark, curling hair might well be compared. It must, however, have been some smaller and softer plant upon which Zeus and Hera reclined, possibly the squill or grape-hyacinth. The 'lettered hyacinth', so often mentioned in Greek literature and connected with the legends of the deaths of Ajax and Hyacinthus, in whose memory it was inscribed with the letters AI or YA, may perhaps be some kind of lily, such as the Martagon lily, or some species of corn-flag,¹ both of which have markings which might, with a little imagination, be recognized as letters. The word *hyacinth* is probably one of the oldest as well as the most beautiful of plant-names. The termination *-ινθος*, which is not Indo-European, occurs in a number of words, such as *ασάμινθος* and *λαβύρινθος*, and in place-names, and it has been conjectured that they are survivals from the language of the pre-Greek inhabitants of the Greek lands. (It has also been suggested that words ending in *-ισσος*, as in *νάρκισσος*—which occurs in the Homeric Hymn

to Demeter, but not in the *Iliad* or *Odyssey*—belong to another group of the same origin.)

The *violet* (*ῖον*) occurs in epithets such as *ἰοειδής*, used of the sea, and is once described (*Od.* v, 72) as growing in a meadow. It is coupled here with *σέλινον*, which is generally translated *parsley*, but is probably the *Apium graveolens*, of which our celery is a cultivated form. It is mentioned as food for horses both in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and was used for crowns of victory in the Isthmian games.

Asphodel is only mentioned in Homer as growing in the meadows of the land of the departed (*Od.* xi, 539; xxiv, 13). It belongs to the lily tribe, and several varieties grow in Southern Europe. Perhaps the most attractive thing about it is its name. The flower is not unpicturesque, consisting of numerous small amber-coloured blossoms, but, after it has flowered in the spring, its foliage quickly becomes ragged and untidy. It is still regarded by modern Greeks as a flower connected with the dead and is often placed on tombs. Our word daffodil, of which the earlier form was affodil, is derived from it.

ἄκανθα, the generic name for the *thistle*, occurs in a delightful simile in the *Odyssey* (v, 328) descriptive of the drifting of Odysseus' raft:

While the raft helpless on the tideway spun,
As down the plain, when Autumn is begun,
Before the North-wind tufts of thistledown.

Lastly, we come to that mysterious plant *moly*, which Hermes recommended to Odysseus as an antidote to Circe's spells (*Od.* x, 304):

Black was its root, the blossom milky white,
And the gods call it moly; mortal wight
Would have hard work to dig it from the
ground;
Howbeit the power of gods is infinite.

Etymologically the word is identical with the Sanskrit *mulam*, 'root'. In Homer it is probably an entirely fabulous plant, but in later writers it means garlic. Garlic is never mentioned in Homer, from which we may perhaps conclude that in his day one did not have to suffer from the fumes of garlic which often give an unpleasant aroma to the exhalations of modern Greeks.

The *οἶον* (*κρόμμον*), however, was

¹ J. Sargeant, *op. cit.* pp. 59, 60.

not lacking, and occurs both in the *Iliad* (xi, 630) and in the *Odyssey* (xix, 233). In the latter passage it is used for a curious comparison :

The broidered shirt that glistened next his skin

Was close and smooth as a dried onion's coat ;
So sleek it was and shining like a sun.

This is a very picturesque way of describing the delicate sheen of the material. In the passage from the *Iliad* onions are taken as a relish before the drinking of wine.

The *bean* (κύαμος) and the *chick-pea* (ἐρέβιθος) both occur only once in Homer in a simile in the *Iliad* (xiii, 589):

And as in some great threshing-floor go leaping
From a broad pan the black-skinned beans or
peas,

As the wind whistles and the winnowers fans ;
So from the plate of glorious Menelaus
The biting arrows glanced and sped afar.

So much for flowers and vegetables. Of the cereals, *barley* (κρίθη, κῆ, ἄλφιτον) is very frequently mentioned in both epics. It was ground in a hand-mill to form a meal or coarse powder, which was used both for bread and for a sort of porridge : it was also sprinkled on the heads of victims for sacrifice. *Wheat* (πυρός) was almost certainly first cultivated in the Nile valley, where its discovery was attributed to Osiris. It is frequently mentioned both in the *Iliad* and in the *Odyssey* and figures with barley in a striking simile (*Il.* xi, 69):

As lines of reapers working towards each other
Drive swathes along a rich man's field of wheat
Or barley, and the handfuls fall in heaps ;
So Greeks and Trojans leapt at one another
And slew, and neither dreamed of deadly
flight.

ζειά and ὄλυρα, which often occur as the fodder of horses, are probably both varieties of the *one-seeded wheat* (*Triticum monococcum*).

Grass in Homer has the generic name of ποίη, found frequently in both epics ; the only distinct species of gramineous plant (except the cereals) mentioned in Homer is the honey-sweet *dog's-tooth grass* (ἄγρωστις), on which the mules of Nausicaa fed while she was dealing with the washing (*Od.* vi, 90). It is one of the commonest grasses of Southern Europe and is found occasionally in this country.

The list of Homeric plants terminates

with the *rushes* and *reeds*. δόναξ, the *pole-reed*, was used for the shafts of arrows ; σχοῖνος is probably the *bull-rush*, and θρύον a generic term for a rush ; κύπειρον, *galingale*, is mentioned as a food for horses (*Il.* xxi, 351 ; *Od.* iv, 603). Another of the *cyperaceae*, the *papyrus*, occurs in Homer only in its adjectival form βύβλινος as an epithet of ropes twisted out of this material (*Od.* xxi, 391). As papyrus does not grow in Greece or Asia Minor (though it can still be seen growing near Syracuse) the reference implies commerce with Egypt. Herodotus tells us that ropes of papyrus were used by the Persians for bridging the river Strymon.

So much for the trees and plants mentioned in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. This enumeration seemed necessary if any conclusions were to be drawn.

It is one of the charms of Homer that he is never learned, he never tries to make a show of erudition ; he left that to his successors, the writers of literary epics. He tells us just enough to enable us to imagine the environment in which his characters play their parts ; the background is sketched in with a few masterly strokes rather than with detailed painting. His interest is in man rather than in nature. Such observation as he shows is displayed not in the description of actual scenes but in similes used to illustrate the actions of his heroes.

In wild nature as such Homer shows no particular delight. Mountains and the torrents which flow from them are to be feared rather than admired, and none of the flowers which he mentions are mountain flowers ; they all belong to the low-lying meadows and marshes and to gardens. Odysseus is almost apologetic when he speaks of the wildness of Ithaca, which is bare and rocky, fit only for the feeding of goats, a rough land but a nurse of heroes. He loves it because it is his home, not because he admires its savageness and wildness.

Again, trees and plants are usually mentioned not for their own sake but in connexion with their usefulness to man, whether as food for himself or his animals, or for building his houses or for making his weapons, ships and

vehicles. This practical point of view is often insisted upon, even in similes. For example a warrior falls (*Il.* xiii, 389),

As falls the oak or poplar or tall pine,
That carpenters with whetted axes fell
Upon the hills *for a ship's ribs*.

And again (*Il.* iv, 482):

And in the dust he fell to earth, as falls
A poplar-tree grown in the bottom-land
Of a great marsh—its stem is smooth, its top
Breaks into branches—which a wainwright hath
Hewn with his gleaming iron, *that he may make
A felloe for some sumptuous car*; and there
It lies and seasons by the river banks.

Ruskin remarks that 'without an exception, every Homeric landscape, intended to be beautiful, is composed of a fountain, a meadow and a shady grove'. This, I think, is very true. The description of Calypso's abode is characteristic (*Od.* v, 63):

But round the cave a verdurous forest sprang
Of poplars, and sweet-scented cypresses,
And alders; and long-pinioned birds in these
Nestled, owls, falcons, chattering cormorants,
And all that ply their business in the seas.
But round the hollow cavern trailing went
A garden-vine with heavy clusters bent;
And rising all arow, four springs abroad
This way and that their shining water sent.
And on both sides fair-flowering meads were
set,
Soft-clad with parsley and with violet.
Even an immortal, if he came, that sight
Marvelling might view and joy thereof might
get.

Similar is the description of the grove where Odysseus is told by Nausicaa to wait before he follows her into the city (*Od.* vi, 291):

You will light upon
Athena's goodly grove of poplar trees
By the roadside: therein a spring wells out
In a rich meadow, as far off the town
As a man's voice will carry if he shout.

In his description of the gardens of Alcinoüs Homer is evidently giving a picture of what he regards as the ideal setting for the palace of a heroic king (*Od.* vii, 114):

And there grow fruit-trees flourishing and
great:
Pear-trees and pomegranates, and apple-trees
Laden with shining apples, and by these,
Sweet-juiced figs and olives burgeoning,
Whose fruiting ceases not nor perishes
Winter or summer, all the year; for there

The western breezes ever soft and fair
Ripen one crop and bring another on.
Apple on apple growing, pear on pear,
Grape-bunch on grape-bunch, fig on fig they
lie

Mellowing to age: and trenched deep thereby
The many-fruited vineyard of the King
Is set: one side of it lies warm and dry,
Where raisins in the parching sun are spread,
And here they gather grapes, and there they
tread

The vintage in the wine-press; while in front
The clusters newly-set their blossom shed.

The chief ideas contained in this passage are fruitfulness, orderliness and symmetry—nature subservient to the purposes of man. But besides an orchard and vineyard, Alcinoüs has a flower-garden:

There likewise, by the vineyard's utmost row,
Are set trim garden beds¹ of every sort,
Full-flowering while the seasons come and go.

It is obvious that Homer likes best to describe a well-ordered landscape and a well-ordered garden. In fact, I think we may say that his attitude towards plant-life is that of the gardener rather than the lover of wild nature, and he attributes the same ideas to his characters. In the *Iliad*, when Thetis is lamenting over the early death which is to be Achilles' lot, she speaks of his childhood and says that she nurtured him 'like a plant in a rich garden plot' (*Il.* xviii, 57). This is Homer's idea of a well-regulated infancy.

And again, in the *Odyssey*, what is Laertes doing when the long-lost Odysseus comes to make himself known to him? He is gardening, in his oldest clothes (*Od.* xxiv, 226):

And there he found
His father in the well-tilled close alone,
Digging about a sapling; and the shirt
He wore was patched and mean and foul with
dirt,
And round his legs were clouted gaiters wound
Of ox-hide, lest the thorns might do them hurt,
And his hands gloved against the briars that
tore,
And on his head a goat-skin cap he wore.

And how does Odysseus address his father, whom he has not seen for so

¹ The word used is *παρσίαι*, which is also used in the New Testament in a picturesque phrase, where, at the feeding of the five thousand, the people sat down *παρσίαι παρσίαι*, 'group by group' like well-arranged flower beds (Mark vi, 40).

many years? He begins by congratulating him on the tidiness of his garden:

O aged man, no lack of skill you show
In orchard-keeping, but well-tended grow
All the trees here within the garden set,
Olive and vine and fig and pear arow,
And truly trimmed is every garden plot.

Only a garden-lover, I think, would have placed this scene in a garden and treated it just in that way.

In conclusion, I think we may say

that Homer's attitude toward plant-life is never romantic, never scientific—it is practical. For him Nature, duly tamed and arranged, provides an ideal background for man's more peaceful activities and produces what he needs for his sustenance, his comfort and his delight.

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Δίκη AND Ὑβρις IN AESCHYLUS' SUPPLIANTS.

THE *Suppliants* is an unsatisfactory play for study in that it raises many questions without providing us with the means of answering them fully. Thus, while action and characterization are simple and even rudimentary, a problem is raised even here by inconsistencies which have been detected in the portrayal of the character of the suppliant maidens themselves.¹ In the sphere of thought, problems multiply, owing perhaps to the fact that this, the first play of the trilogy, is used to suggest ideas and problems which are to be more definitely formulated and more fully developed later. Hence we find a great diversity of opinion among modern critics as to what is the central issue in the play. By various writers this has been said to be the law about consanguineous marriages, the right of women to refuse marriage, the law relating to heiresses, the protection of suppliants, the preservation of a right of asylum, the conflict of Greek and barbarian, and the conflict of male and female. It is not denied that all these ideas may have their place in the play and contribute in some degree to the heightening of the dramatic conflict. The difficulty is to determine what is the central problem and what are merely minor themes.

Among the recurrent ideas which are woven into the play there are two, δίκη and ὕβρις, which appear to receive the greatest emphasis, so much so that it would seem that the poet used the simple ancient legend as a means of

dramatizing the conflict between these two opposing principles. In the case of δίκη he is dealing with an idea of many applications. It is at once the guiding principle of the universe, upheld and followed by the supreme god, and the bond which holds society together, restrains lawless self-assertiveness, and makes civilized human life possible.² Again δίκη, as manifested among men, includes the broadest principles of equity and the principles underlying the most detailed provisions of statute law. In the *Suppliants* Aeschylus' interest in abstract justice is reflected in frequent references to technical legal matters and in the use of a number of technical or half-technical legal terms, either unchanged or in the form of poetic variants.³ Nothing is too technical for

² Cf. R. Hirzel, *Themis, Dike und Verwantes*, 104-106, 157-166, 178, 210-225.

³ 5. φεύγομεν, in both the literal sense of 'flee' and the secondary sense of 'be in exile.' 7. γνωσθεῖσαν, the simple verb instead of καταγινώσκω, as in *I.G.* I² 10. 29. 172. γόνῳ (= φύσει), a legal term. Cf. *Lys.* 13. 91. 229. φύγη ματαίων αἰτίας. If the correction ματαίων is sound, we appear to have a poetic variant of ἐνέχεσθαι αἰτίας or ἀπολύεσθαι αἰτίων. 233. πρᾶγος, poetic for πρᾶγμα in the sense of 'case.' 239. ἀπρόξενοι, obviously in its technical sense, although this involves an anachronism. 314. ῥυσίων, 'restitution,' 'deliverance' (Liddell and Scott). There may also be a hint of the legal implications of the word, the gesture of touching involving an assertion of proprietorship. Cf. Vürtheim, *op. cit.*, 38-39. 383-384. A suggestion of the institution of δίκαι ἀπὸ συμβόλων. 388. ἐγγύτατα γένους, a legal phrase; cf. *Isaeus* 10. 5. 390. φεύγειν, 'urge in your defence.' 391. κύρος, the authority of a legal κύριος. 412. ῥυσίων, property seized in distraint. 435-6. ἐκτίειν θέμιν, equivalent to the prosaic δίδοναι δίκην. 472. ἐκπράξω χρέος, exact payment of a debt. 517. λαοὺς συγκαλῶν, a suggestion of

¹ U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, *Aischylos: Interpretationen*, 11; J. Vürtheim, *Aischylos' Schutzflehende*, 183.